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ABSTRACT

Residential relocation during the early adolescent years can make numerous adaptational demands during a developmentally sensitive period. This study was conducted to determine the range and prevalence of adolescent concerns related to relocation; to assess the congruence between adolescent-reported concerns and parental perceptions of the adolescents' concerns; and to examine the relationship between congruence in this specific context and intimacy in the mother-adolescent relationship. Home-based interview and questionnaire sessions were conducted with 71 seventh- and eighth-graders and their parents. All students began the school year in a new school due to an intercommunity change in residence. Responses yielded 11 categories of concerns. The most frequently cited pre-move worry was "leaving old friends," while the adolescents' biggest struggles in September were "making new friends" and "academic achievement in the new schools." The percentage of adolescents and parents reporting each of the 11 types of difficulties was similar, suggesting that the mothers were knowledgeable about problems their teenagers were likely to encounter following relocation. However, mothers frequently failed to recognize some of their adolescent's specific concerns, and often reported concerns that their adolescent did not cite. Other findings suggest that intimacy between mothers and daughters play an important role in accruate maternal identification of their daughters' concerns during the transition. For boys, self-reported intimacy with their mothers seemed to tell little about accurate maternal identification of concerns. (NB)

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Adolescents' Concerns Following Relocation: Comparison with Parents' Perceptions

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Adolescents' Concerns Following Relocation: Comparison with Parents' Perceptions

Residential relocation during the early adolescent years is a transition that makes numerous adaptational demands during a developmentally sensitive period (Vernberg & Field, 1990). The limited empirical data available suggest that a sizable proportion of young teenagers experience relocation as a stressful experience, especially if the move is from one community to another (Raviv, Keinan, Abazon, & Raviv, 1990).

The family appears to serve as an important source of many types of support during early adolescence (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985), and it seems likely that families play a role in the process of adapting after a move (Vernberg & Field, 1990). However, the nature and extent of this role in the context of relocation has only recently begun to be investigated sytematically (e.g., Vernberg, Beery, Abwender & Ewell, 1990). The type and appropriateness of assistance parents will offer may be influenced by their awareness of the adolescents' concerns and worries at various points in time following relocation. However, adolescent and parent reports of various aspects of the adolescent's adjustment, particularly those involving internal states, often fail to show strong convergence, and this lack of convergence has led to interest in determining the sources of parent-adolescent disagreements (Kashani, Orvachel, Burke & Reid, 1985).

The current study has three purposes:

1. To determine the range and prevalence of adolescent concerns or worries related to relocation.
2. To assess the congruence between adolescent-reported concerns

related to relocation and parental perceptions of the adolescents' concerns.

3. To examine the relationship between congruence in this specific context and intimacy in the mother-adolescent relationship.

Method

Participants and Procedures.

A total of 71 seventh and eighth graders (ages 11-13) who began the school year in a new school due to an intercommunity change in residence participated in the study. Home-based interview and questionnaire sessions with the adolescents and their parents were conducted on three occasions during the school year (September, November, May). The current study uses data from the first interview only.

Measures.

Concerns About Move. During the September interview, adolescents recalled their greatest concerns about the impending move prior to relocating. They were also asked to list the biggest struggles they were currently experiencing having to do with settling in after the move. Mothers were asked independently for their perceptions of their teenagers' greatest worries before moving and current struggles with regard to post-relocation adjustment. Responses were coded into 11 rationally derived categories for comparison of adolescent to parent report. Two scores were computed from these data: (1) the number of agreements between parent and adolescent ("agreements"), and (2) the number of items mentioned by one person but not the other ("disagreements").

Intimacy between Adolescent and Mother. Reports of intimacy

between the adolescent and his/her mother were obtained using the Intimacy scale of the Network of Relationships Inventory (Furman & Buhrmester, 1985). In this structured interview, the adolescents reported the frequency of occurence of specific types of interactions with each parent thought to reflect intimacy and self-disclosure (e.g., "How much do you share your secrets and private feelings with this person?") on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "little or none" to "the most".

Results and Interpretation

Range and Prevalence of Concerns. The 11 categories of concerns fell into three general groupings: (1) concern about leaving their old community, (2) concerns about the physical process of relocating, and (3) concerns regarding adjusting to the new community (Table 1). The most frequently cited pre-move worry was "leaving old friends", while the adolescents' biggest struggles in September were likely to be "making new friends" and "academic achievement in the new school". The types of concerns are generally similar to those noted by Raviv et al. (1990), although adolescents in the current sample reported fewer concerns about the actual relocation process.

Congruence between Adolescent-Reported and Parent-Reported Concerns. The percentage of adolescents and parents reporting each of the 11 types of difficulties is similar, suggesting that mothers are knowledgeable in general about the types of problems teenagers are likely to encounter following relocation. However, mothers frequently failed to recognize one or more of their teenager's specific concerns, and often reported concerns that their adolescent did not cite. Although most mother-adolescent dyads (58%) had one or more

agreements ($\bar{X}$ = .68, range = 0 to 2), almost all (91%) showed one or more disagreements ($\bar{X}$ = 2.1, range = 0 to 5). Concordance between mother-adolescent dyads did not vary across child gender.

Intimacy as a Contributor to Adolescent-Mother Congruence. The potential role of intimacy between adolescents and mothers as a contributor to accurate parental perceptions of adolescent concerns was assessed via two hierarchical regression analyses using number of disagreements and number of agreements as dependent variables. Gender, intimacy, and the interaction between gender and intimacy served as independent variables in each analysis (the interaction term was included due to numerous reports of gender differences in intimacy in adolescents' interpersonal relationships and in parent-adolescent interactions).

The interaction of gender and intimacy accounted for 18% of the variance in disagreements (F (3,63)= 10.49, $p < .01$), and for 11% of the variance in agreements (F (3,63) = 4.84, $p < .03$).

Plots of the regression equations (Figures 1 and 2), as well as followup within-gender analyses of the association between intimacy and agreements/disagreements, demonstrate that greater mother-adolescent intimacy is related to more accurate parental perceptions of adolescent concerns for girls but not for boys.

This finding suggests that intimacy between mothers and daughters plays an important role in accurate maternal identification of their daughters' concerns during a specific transition. For boys, in contrast, self-reported intimacy with their mothers seems to tell little about accurate maternal identification of concerns.

One plausible explanation is that girls may be less inclined than

boys to show their concerns in an overt or easily observable fashion. Mothers therefore could accurately identify their daughters' worries only if a high degree of intimacy and self-disclosure were present. Boys, on the other hand, may be more inclined to allow worries and concerns to be acted out behaviorally, thereby enabling mothers to identify specific concerns with or without self-disclosure by their sons.

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Table 1. Percentage of adolescents and parents endorsing each type of relocation difficulty (September only).

	Respondent	
Concern/Difficulty	Adolescent	Parent
Leaving Old Community		
Leaving friends	21	18
Leaving relatives	4	1
Missing familiar settings	2	4
Relocation Process		
Setting up new house	10	6
Uncertainty about new house	7	2
Adjusting to New Community		
Personal safety/crime/drugs	12	9
Language change	4	4
Orientation to community	9	13
Making friends	55	51
Academics in new school	33	38
Change in family composition	7	10

Note: Percentages sum to more than 100 because respondants were allowed to list multiple concerns.

Figure 1. Mother-Adolescent
Agreements as a function of Intimacy and Gender

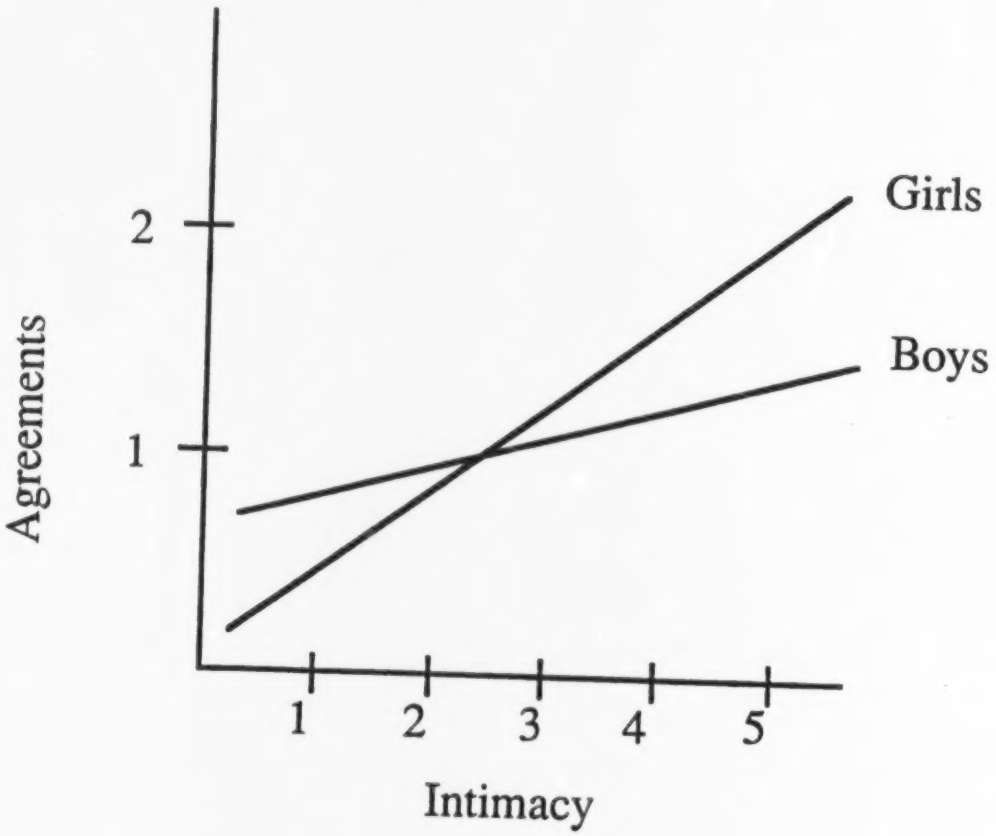

Figure 2. Mother-Adolescent
Disagreements as a function of Intimacy and Gender